

WAR WITH CARTHAGE

THE ROMAN REPUBLIC WENT FROM strength to strength. Rome's armies conquered all of Italy, defeated the Greek King Pyrrhus in 275 BCE and became a major force to be reckoned with in the Mediterranean. But they were not the only "world power" there.

The Carthaginians' territory covered North Africa and part of Spain. Carthage then began to conquer Sicily, the large island close to the "toe" of Italy.

Right "The elephants were of great use to the Carthaginians. The enemy were too terrified of their appearance to come anywhere near them" – Polybius, Roman historian.



Battles between Rome and Carthage

First war

264 BCE Carthage occupies Messina. Romans defeat the Carthaginians and occupy the town.
260 BCE Rome builds its fleet. Full-scale war.
241 BCE Carthage surrenders.

Second war

221 BCE Hannibal made Carthaginian commander-in-chief.
219 BCE Saguntum captured. Rome declares war.
218 BCE Hannibal marches across the Alps. Romans defeated at rivers Ticino and Trebia.
217 BCE Two Roman legions lost at Lake Trasimeno.
216 BCE Rome's worst defeat at Cannae.
204 BCE Romans invade North Africa.
202 BCE Carthage defeated at Zama.
183 BCE Hannibal commits suicide.

Third war

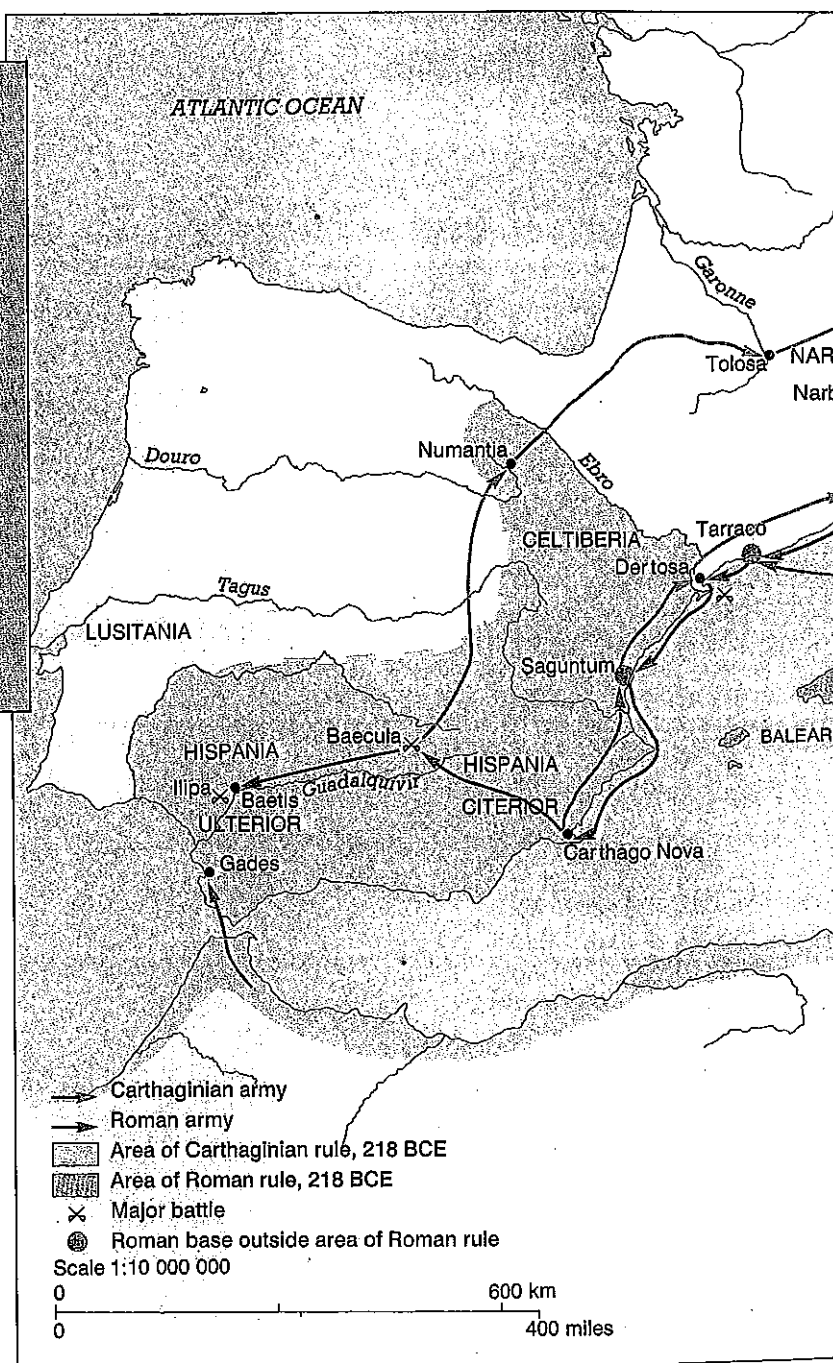
149 BCE War breaks out again.
146 BCE City of Carthage completely destroyed. North Africa becomes a Roman province.

THE FIRST WAR

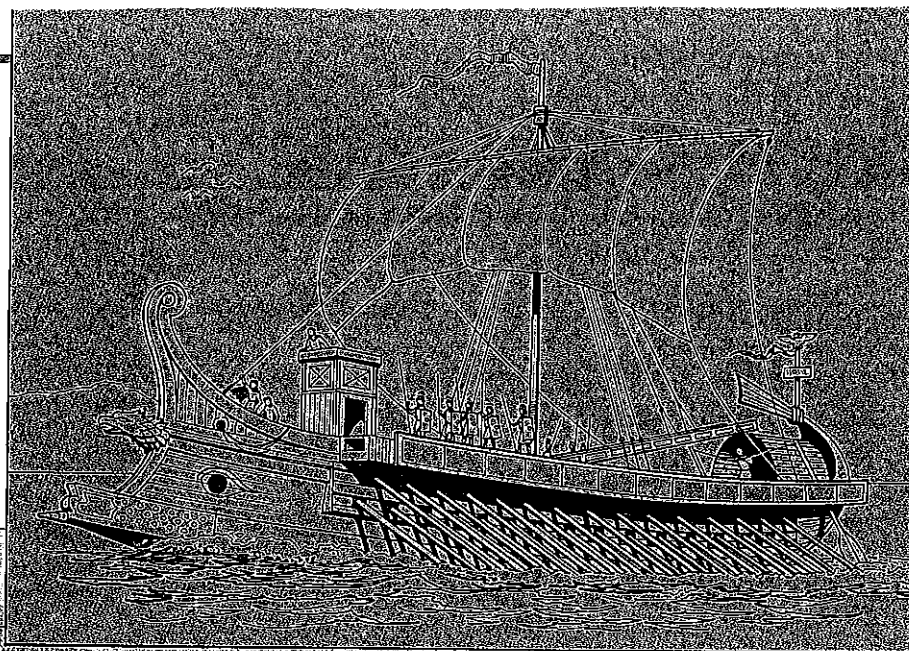
When the Carthaginians occupied the town of Messina (modern Messina) the Romans sent two legions of soldiers there and defeated them. Full-scale war then broke out. For 20 years the two mighty nations fought each other. A few years later the Romans moved into Corsica and Sardinia. The war ended in 241 BCE with a battle off the west coast of Sicily. Rome occupied Sicily and made it its first province.

HANNIBAL – ENEMY OF ROME

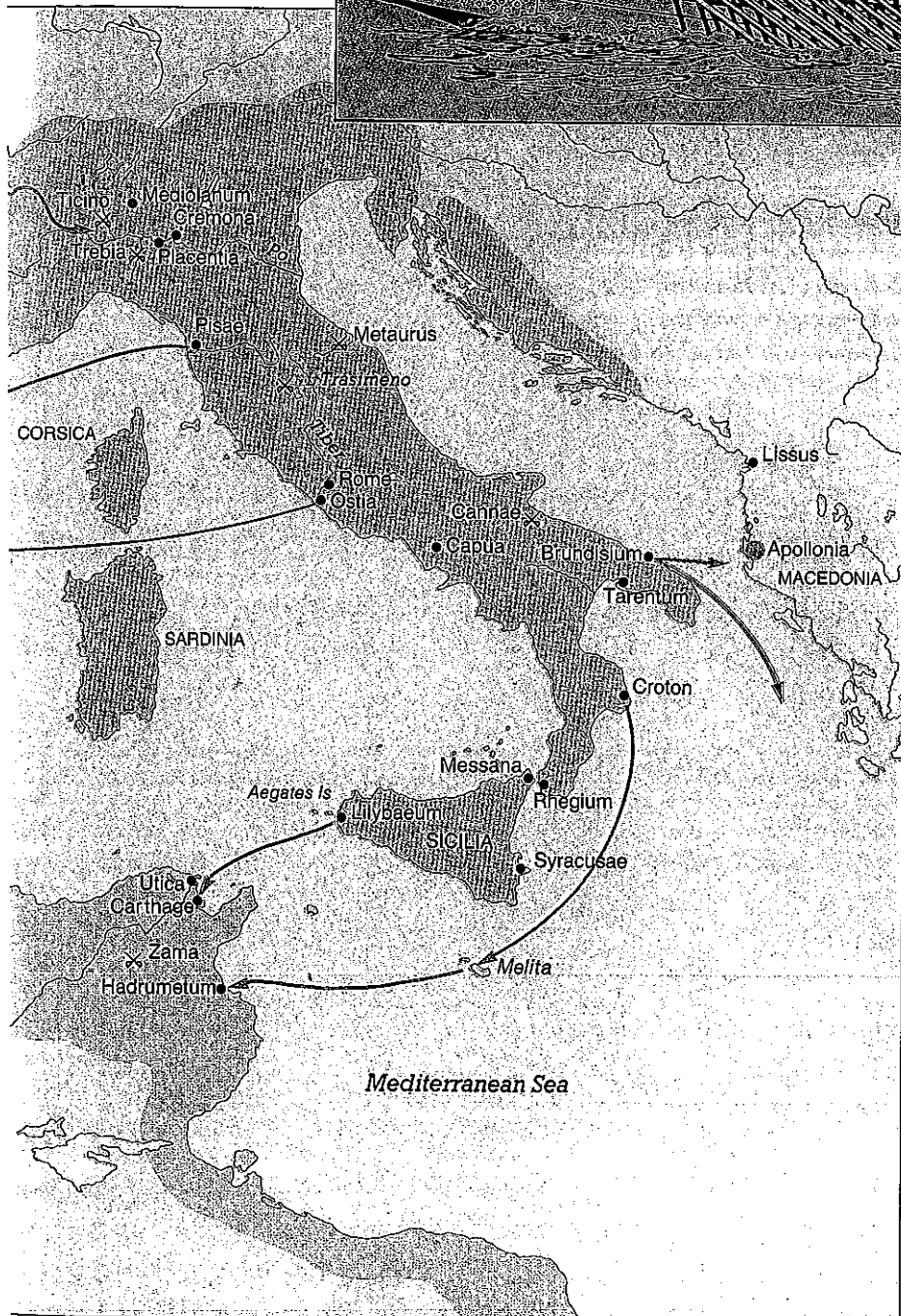
Hamilcar had been the Carthaginian commander at the end of the first war against Rome. In 237 BCE he led an army into Spain to conquer new territory and defend Carthaginian settlements already there. Spain provided the Carthaginians with rich supplies



Below Campaign routes of the two "world powers." Both the Romans and the Carthaginians needed an efficient navy. At first the Carthaginians had the naval advantage. Both sides also needed wealth to pay for the expensive wars and for their allies.



Left The Carthaginians were a seafaring trading nation with a large navy. The Romans had to build a fleet especially to fight them. First they built 120 ships such as these, later another 200. Off the Aegates Islands west of Sicily the Romans sank 50 Carthaginian warships laden with supplies for the troops and captured 70 more. The rest of the fleet escaped, but Carthage was beaten.



of farm produce and metals with which they fed and equipped their armies.

"Hamilcar was about to cross to Spain with his army and was making sacrifices. Hannibal, then about nine years old, was childishly teasing his father to take him too. His father, still angry at the loss of Sicily and Sardinia, led him to the altar and made him swear to be the enemy of Rome as soon as he was able." – the historian Livy.

Hamilcar's son, Hannibal, took over control of Carthaginian forces in Spain in 221 BCE. He was only 25 years old. After two years he conquered the town of Saguntum, Rome's ally. The Romans sent two armies against the Carthaginians – one to Carthage, and the other to Massilia (now Marseille).

CROSSING THE ALPS

Hannibal astonished the Romans by marching to Italy across the Alps. No Roman believed he would take this route. His huge army of 40,000 men also had 37 war elephants with them. It was a hard march, and Hannibal reached Italy with only 26,000 men and 12 elephants. However, he brought in more troops and with an army of about 50,000 began to defeat the Romans in their own country.

ROME SAVED

A new Roman general, Publius Cornelius Scipio, was appointed to cope with this crisis. He went to attack Carthage and forced Hannibal to fight him there. Hannibal's army was defeated at Zama in 202 BCE.

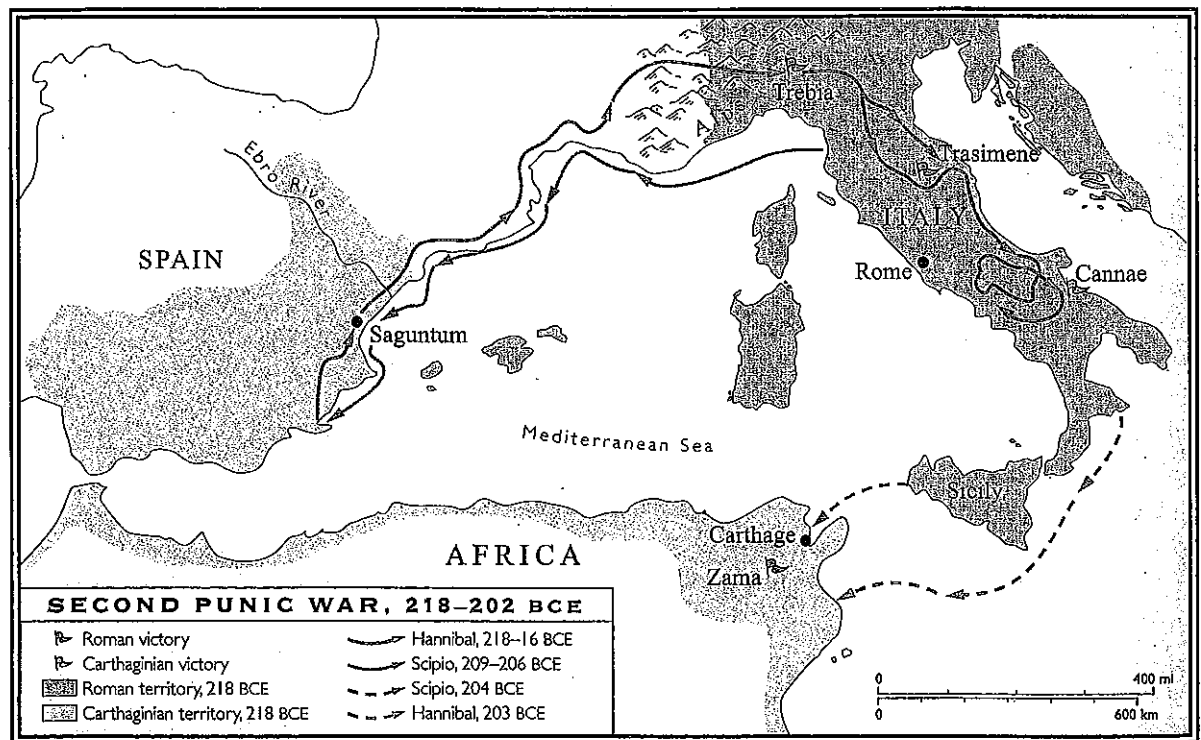
Tunisia), his hometown in North Africa, and marched to the gates of Rome. Rome had never faced a more dangerous enemy in all of its long history.

Who were these Carthaginians who hated the Romans so much? They were seafaring people who left their homeland in Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon) around 800 BCE. They set up colonies in North Africa and Spain, and also on the island of Sicily—the ball that the Italian boot seems to be kicking.

The most powerful Phoenician colony was the North African city of Carthage. It became a busy trading post for merchants from all over the Mediterranean world. In time, Carthage gained independence from its mother country, conquered other Phoenician colonies, and founded colonies of its own. By the 3rd century BCE, this thriving and wealthy city controlled trade across the western Mediterranean.

Like two bullies on the same playground, Rome and Carthage both wanted to be the power in the western

media + terra =
“middle” + “land”
The Romans first called it
mare nostrum, “our sea.”
Later, they called it the
Mediterranean—“in the mid-
dle of the land”—because, by
then, the Empire completely
encircled the sea.



Mediterranean world. They both wanted to dominate the fertile island of Sicily and control trade at the Straits of Messina, between Sicily and the Italian mainland. Even before Hannibal's time, the clash between the two cities was brewing. Although both cities were strong and proud, they were very different. Rome's army had already conquered all of Italy. Yet Carthage was wealthier and had a much better navy.

A titanic struggle between Rome and Carthage began in 264 BCE—17 years before Hannibal was born. It started when the Sicilian city of Messina asked Rome to join in its fight against Syracuse, another city in Sicily. Then Syracuse asked Carthage to join in its fight against Messina and Rome. A series of wars raged, on and off, for a century, with these two military alliances fighting against one another. These were called the Punic Wars, from the Latin word for Phoenicia. The enemies fought one another in Italy, Spain, Sicily, and North Africa.

At the beginning of the First Punic War, the Romans had no navy, only trading ships. They didn't even know how to fight on the sea. They only knew how to fight on land, so they invented a grappling machine that made sea battles more like land battles. The machine had huge hooks with heavy ropes attached. The Roman soldier-sailors lobbed the hooks over the side of an enemy ship. The hooks bit into the other ship, holding it while the Romans pulled it up beside their own. With the enemy's ship locked in place, the Romans scrambled aboard and fought hand-to-hand on deck. This technique literally gave the Romans a "fighting chance" at sea.

In 241 BCE, a Roman commander attacked a Carthaginian fleet of 170 ships. Despite stormy seas, Rome sank 50 enemy ships and captured 70 more. What was left of the Carthaginian fleet sailed home, defeated. When the ships arrived in their home port, the commander was executed.

After 23 years of battle, the First Punic War was over. Rome controlled Sicily and dominated the western Mediterranean. The Roman army had broken Carthage's grip. The memory of this shameful defeat tortured Hannibal's father.

THE PUNIC WARS

8th century BCE

Rome and Carthage are both founded

264–241 BCE

Rome fights Carthage in First Punic War

220 BCE

Hannibal lays siege to Saguntum

218 BCE

Rome declares war on Carthage again

216 BCE

Hannibal defeats the Romans at Cannae

202 BCE

Scipio Africanus defeats Hannibal at Zama

146 BCE

Scipio's grandson completes destruction of Carthage